

WHO STOLE THE MUSIC?

Due to space limitations in the September/October issue of Clamor, we weren't able to print any of the tons of music reviews that we had slated for the issue. In an effort to bring them to you in a timely fashion, we're providing them for you here. We hope you find something you like. If you'd like to write reviews for Clamor, visit www.clamormagazine.org/freestuff.html to see our list of available material.

16/Today Is The Day

Zodiac Dreaming split CD
Trash Art
www.trashart.com



Two of the longest running indie metal acts team up to show that they still have what it takes to unleash some powerful songs. 16 start off this record with 3 slow, driving tracks with their standard display of Sabbath-esque riffage. Their not covering much new ground, but are still able to play with a lot of power. Today Is The Day blast into their 2 songs with the variegated rhythms and unique vocals that they're so well-known for. The songs on this split strike me as more interesting than some of the other records they've released lately. Both bands come off pretty solid, but this record isn't particularly essential either.

-Rich Booher

AMPLINE

The Choir
Tiberius Records
www.tiberiusrecords.com
ampline.indiepress.com



I first heard of Ampline when I was playing in an instrumental band myself. I looked through the internet to see if I could find more bands like us and I stumbled upon Ampline. I mail ordered they're demo from SunSeaSky productions and really didn't know what to expect. I had listened to some of their songs on their web site, but as you will find out they are if anything varied in sound.

I remember getting the CD and thinking what most people do, but through the eyes of a person who had played in an instrumental band, which is that this band sounds like a band with a singer but not necessarily I was very surprised at the band's sound. Its a very guitar driven band and at the time I had listened to them, the only thing keeping them from being a really solid band was their drummer. He could really change the whole feeling of the song due to lagging and sloppy playing. It sounded too local and too amateur.

Today, with their release on Tiberius records, a change in line up and an ironic title, The Choir, this is a great band for listeners with adequate attention spans. Its hard to pinpoint a genre, but I guess its just a sum of its parts if one was to analyze influences. There's some hard rock, some indie, some prog and some alt-grunge, a sound that is what it is, four guys with who like to play what they know

and not really be cornered into categories.

I think that this band deserves recognition for sticking to instrumental and because of their perseverance and sincere sound. Check them out if your older brother was into Rush or into Joe Satriani and you couldn't stand the virtuoso cockiness.

The CD layout is pretty basic and not very modern or fashionable which is very representative of the band. Its clean and is a sound that's familiar but never ordinary.

-Pablo Dodero

Backstabbers Inc

While you were sleeping
bsi.rockxroll.com

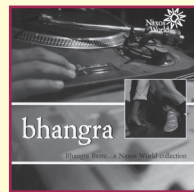


Backstabbers Inc play brutal metallic hardcore in the vein of bands like Converge, Deadguy, From Ashes Rise, etc. The music comes across with a lot of energy that other bands in the same genre could learn from. The lyrics are dark and angry, and cover topics like friendships, alienated labor, and attempts to establish individuality. My only gripe is with the use of samples. It seems like they were thrown in pretty quickly and taken from rather clichÉ sources (i.e. Fight Club, Al Pacino). The Al Pacino lacks any punch that a good sample ought to have. Besides that, however, this is a very solid record that fans of chaotic, heavy music will probably enjoy.

-Rich Booher

Bhangra Beatz!

Various Artists
Naxos World Collection
www.naxosworld.com



On college radio, in record stores, and in cars on Silicon Valley's busy streets, I've heard bhangra music for years. At first the melding of technology with a traditional, folk-based style seemed strange. While the instrumentation is different (samplers, turntables, synthesizers), the rhythms are the same as they were hundreds of years ago. I get it now. The artists on Bhangra Beatz have grafted traditional lyrics and beats into modern arrangements, designed to make people move.

When I find out about a new musical style, I'm often reluctant to buy a CD on the basis of just one recommendation. Bhangra Beatz is a great starting point for becoming familiar with the genre; you might not like everything on the disc, but the tracks provide

a great survey of the style, and plenty of variety.

Getting to know Bhangra Beatz, I approached it in many ways. I put it on while my housemates and I made dinner. It was perfect; an unobtrusive beat, different from our usual (funk-related) selections.

The liner notes provide a history of bhangra music, and a summary of the subject matter of each song's lyrics. It was great fun to put the CD on "shuffle", and try to guess which of the songs was playing based on lyrical content ("The hero witnesses the marriage of his lover to someone else...Putt Sardaran Da is a patriotic song with a never-say-die attitude"...). Not understanding the lyrics wasn't a problem; for me, it makes it easier to pay attention to the music.

After dinner, my three-year-old son discovered that Bhangra Beatz is great dance music; he circled and hopped around the living room, occasionally letting out a subdued "Oy!" with the background vocals on Aajo Billo, by Balwinder Safri. High praise.

Bhangra Beatz is a great introduction to bhangra music. The artists vary in their style and presentation, but the sound and the beats are clear. Bhangra makes you move.

- Bruce Bullis

Brant Bjork & The Operators

Brant Bjork & The Operators
The Music Cartel, 2002
www.music-cartel.com

Brant Bjork became recognized in the stoner rock community through his work in Kyuss and Fu Manchu. This is the debut recording of his new band (his sophomore solo release, however), done with some help from Schneebi of Earthlings? Breaking out of the psychedelic hard rock mold, Bjork delivers a diverse album containing pop and jazz elements. There is a heavy substrate of funk here and along with the other elements exhibits the classic genres he has an honest love for. Like a true fan of this music and an experienced musician, Bjork blends the sounds effectively for every other rock fan that "grew up on Ramones, Cars, Elvis Costello," as Bjork describes himself. There is a focus on groove here, but the approach is also song-based. On his debut solo album Jalamanta Bjork performed all the music, and here he does most of that with some help from Schneebi, guitarist Mario Lalli (Fatsø Jetson) and background vocalist Franz Stahl (Wool, Foo Fighters).

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Bratmobile

Girls Get Busy
Lookout Records
www.lookoutrecords.com



One of the big surprises of the late 1990s was when it was revealed Bratmobile was reforming. Emerging out of the early '90s Riot Grrrl movement, this trio blazed out a jagged, primitive sound that took the anyone-can-do-it ethic of punk to its literal conclusion until a number of factors (including being placed under a type of media scrutiny from which no one could escape unscathed) led to their 1994 breakup. After four years apart, Bratmobile returned to action older, smarter, and more than a little angrier; touring (including playing the original Ladyfest in 2000), recording and making a scene in a world where sexism and homophobia are sold as "edgy" and "rebellious" and women are given plastic pop instead of real empowerment and support.

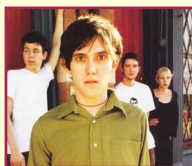
"Girls Get Busy" marks a change in presentation for Bratmobile. The primitive edge of the band is there but fleshed out, with bass and keyboards making a more visible appearance than on their previous records. The result is a thicker, denser sound that casts the guitar work in a fuller light and, at times, adds depth to the drumming. The signature neo surf-garage-punk vibe seems to meld into areas they hinted at in the past but few expected (vintage "new wave," power pop and/or '80s hardcore elements for example). The songs also merge the personal/political feminist dialectic of the past with a overt big picture theme with songs about sexism in the music world ("I'm In The Band"), 9-11 and the "war on terror" ("Shop For America," "United We Don't") as much as taking on relationship downfalls ("That's Happening") and the Chandra Levy case ("Shut Your Face"). While some of these topics have been hinted at in their past work, Bratmobile's courage in stating them in post 9-11 America creates an album that can be both current and timeless, mixing their (often underrated) knack for hooks and raw songs with a dialogue that needs to be heard amidst the flag waving, fear, and borderline McCarthyism of today.

So what does Bratmobile have to offer in 2002? The trio that struck a nerve with "Kiss and Ride" back in 1991 have matured, using their experience to move the band forward while keeping the spirit alive. Their first post-reunion album, 2000's "Ladies, Women and Girls," showed them several steps ahead and "Girls Get Busy" now finds them taking the hopes and fears of our dangerous time and making music that demands to be heard, screaming for vengeance amidst a world of media disinformation and long-held prejudices. While the path they're taking isn't the most popular at the moment, Bratmobile's history of bouncing back will continue; this time they've managed to create one of the best albums of 2002 in the process.

- Boone Stigall.

Bright Eyes

Lifted, or The Story is in the Soil
— Keep Your Ear To The Ground
Saddle Creek Records
www.saddle-creek.com



Bright Eyes changed my life a year ago when I came across the album, "Fevers and Mirrors." I didn't understand their popularity at all the first few times through; it seemed dramatic, pretentious, and void of any true emotion — another average attempt at a genre entirely saturated with mediocrity and unwarranted vanity. The perfect example of why I didn't listen to the bands that were coming out, but stuck with the solid few entangled within my roots.

Entirely against my will, I started to hear it. That instead of the emulation of emotion, this was the real thing. That this didn't have anything to do with what labels, tours, contracts, and egos. This was far more akin to how music began in the first place and why it became a popular medium — the expression of an idea not only to rid yourself of demons, but to allow someone else to understand your existence and by that, feel a part of something larger.

What I had originally heard as pretension is now clearly someone conveying something real, significant and new with an agility that blows my mind.

My experience with the newest Bright Eyes album has been a similar progression. It's true, when I put it in, I wanted a new set of songs to make — "Fevers and Mirrors" the double album it wasn't, and that is definitely not what's here. The first few times I heard it, the distinct country flavor mixed in with the melancholy I'm used to did not sit well at all. But as it always seems to be, after a few listens, the distinct honesty of Conor's voice comes through and out of nowhere, the album is brilliant. He writes the lyrics I wish I did, says all the things I didn't know I wanted to hear. After being accosted by so many bands that fall within such easily defined and predictable terms, their sketchy motives so disappointingly obvious, listening to Bright Eyes allows calmness in the knowledge that genuine things are still being created.

-James Marks

Burn

Last Great Sea
Revelation Records
www.revhq.com



The Burn self-titled EP which was released in 1990 was one of the great under-appreciated treasures of hardcore. Burn were playing original music with really creative approaches to lyrics when many bands had become derivative and predictable. This EP was recorded in 1992 and has been circulating in tape-trading circles as the *New Morality* demo, but has now been released officially by Revelation as the "Last Great Sea" EP.

Last Great Sea starts off with a catchy riff that's reminiscent of "I Against I" era Bad Brains, which seems to be an influence over much of the music throughout the record. It then flows into the mid-paced mixture of melody and discordance which runs through all of the Burn material. All of the songs on the record are characterized by interesting shifts between heavy, chaotic and melodic parts. The vocals are much better than they were on their other ep, and flow extremely well with the music. These three songs clock in at just about 12 minutes total. Usually hardcore songs at this length would be a really bad idea. However, Burn are

able to pull off long songs, keeping them interesting and varied without making them sound as if they simply combined 2 or 3 shorter songs.

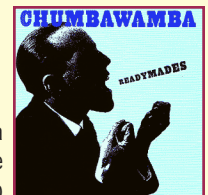
The lyrics are for the most part really vague and poetic, but the song "The New Morality" is the song with the most direct lyrics in Burn's repertoire. The lyrics are a general grievance against the state of the world, a lament against capitalist accumulation, poverty and the powerlessness that most people experience. It ends with a hopeful call for people to "fight back," but to remain aware that we need to guard against the failures of the past. The lyrics are excellent in that they're optimistic enough to avoid the "woe are we" tone used by so many hardcore bands approaching political topics without falling into an optimism that seems hopelessly naïve.

Burn comes through with an incredibly solid record that seems to define the band even better than their original EP. Thank goodness this has been released in a format that will be accessible to those who are interested in acquiring it.

-Rich Booher

Chumbawamba

Readymades
Universal/Republic Records



The story of Chumbawamba appears to be one of the more unlikely stories of modern pop culture. An underground band known for their anarchist beliefs as much as their music, they were suddenly thrust into stardom with 1997's "Tubthumping." While the song emerged in unfamiliar places, the band took the opportunity to voice their political views and stand their ground. Fans going to their shows expecting a pleasant pop group got drinking nuns, an eclectic set of genre-jumping songs, and songs covering such topics as censorship, war, Nazism, and homophobia. While many quickly tried to write them off as "one hit wonders," the band continues putting out challenging music and taking stances few expect (the recent licensing of "Pass It Along" to GM and then funding anti-corporate activists with the proceeds being a case in point).

"Readymades," the latest album from Chumbawamba, on first listen may be a shock. The band seems mellower with folk music samples and rhythm loops that mesh with late '60s-early '70s pop/rock vibes almost more than their eclectic punk-cum-dance rock. Upon repeated listens though, the disc finds Chumba to be as diverse (and unrepentant) as ever with songs covering British navy mutinies ("Salt Fare, North Sea") to a historical take on the "anti-globalism" movement (the single "Don't Try This At Home") to the case of British political prisoner Satpal Ram ("Don't Pass Go") to sweatshop labor ("Sewing Up Crap") and poverty ("After Shelley") among others. Musically, the sound seems to border on being accessible to the infamous "adult alternative" radio format with overt pop hints woven throughout. One song ("Home With Me") even starts with a piano part that suggests ELO (though I doubt Jeff Lynne would ever, even subtly, reference East Timor, the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, or the Kronstadt Rebellion into

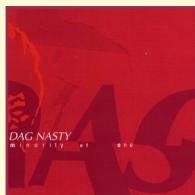
what would otherwise be a late '60s-flavored pop-rock ballad or future classic hit radio fare). However, there are more than enough Chumba trademarks in these songs subtly or otherwise (genre jumping, the use of horns, wah wah guitar, and huge background choruses that cross ABBA with drunken football chants to name a few) that create a disc that is unlikely to come from most other artists in any era, especially nowadays.

Will "Readymades" return Chumbawamba to the status they had with "Tubthumping"? It's difficult to say given the fickleness of mainstream pop audiences and corporate radio's tendency to run screaming from artists who offer a real alternative to the way things are (case in point: Clear Channel's radio blacklist after 911 including all Rage Against the Machine songs). However there's always a need for catchy, accessible music that takes stances and says something and Chumbawamba does excel at doing that. Thus, Chumbawamba will continue doing what they always do: make music and use their art as a platform for question and change, choosing convictions over celebrity in the process. Wish more acts would do the same.

- Boone Stigall.

Dag Nasty

Minority of One
Revelation Records
www.revhq.com



Let's set the scene.

It's 1985. The "Emo" style of punk has begun to entrench itself within the Washington D.C. punk music community. You've got Rites of Spring, Embrace, and some unknown band named Dag Nasty.

Formed by ex-Minor Threat/Government Issue/Meatmen guitarist Brian Baker, Dag Nasty's original line up also included drummer Colin Sears, bassist Roger Marbury, and singer Shawn Brown (of Swiz). Having become disillusioned with Shawn's vocal interpretations of the songs, the band recruits their roadie (ex-DYS frontman Dave Smalley) to assume lead duties. After a few live gigs with Dave, and the watershed debut album "Can I Say" for Dischord Records, Dave leaves the band to go to graduate school. The band enlists the help of a third singer by the name of Peter Cortner. Surviving various band member changes, Dag Nasty forges ahead with two more albums, "Wig Out at Denko's" and the underrated "Field Day" before finally disbanding in 1989.

Flash forward 17 years. Punk, especially Emo, is the order of the day. Brian has been performing as a member of Bad Religion for eight years, following a string of what could be called musical dalliances that included Junkyard, Careless, and Bash & Pop. Colin has played for every band on Earth, most notably The Marshes and Los Vampiros (with Peter Cortner). Roger's been making the rounds in bands such as Alloy (also with Colin), and Dave has been padding his resume with All, Down By Law, and The Sharpshooters. The band did come together briefly for a couple of weeks in 1992 to record the album "Four on the Floor," with Brett Gurewitz producing for Epitaph. Although containing some moments of brilliance, the album was largely regarded as a sort of one-off that didn't seem to have had much thought put into it. Then, in 1999, Dag Nasty got

together once again and recorded the blistering song "Incinerate" for inclusion on Fastmusic's "Disarming Violence" compilation. If you've ever heard that song, then you know why Dag Nasty decided that the magic was still there and powerful enough for them to do another full-length album. That album is "Minority of One" for Revelation Records.

Let's take a look at the ingredients, shall we? The lead track "Ghosts" answers the question "What would happen if the members of Bad Religion and Dag Nasty got into a car wreck?" quite brilliantly. That old Dag Magic is there, with some soaring harmonies and heartfelt lyrics to boot. The title track then pounds and thumps with increased regularity, invoking a pattern reminiscent of "Staring at the Rude Boys" by The Ruts.

"Bottle This" then begins with a guitar hook so catchy, you almost want to hear Baker keep on playing it with no accompaniment whatsoever. The next song, "Broken Days," makes great use of Smalley's almost falsetto-like vocal style. Just when you've been lulled to sleep, the band wakes you up with the pointedly direct lyrics and rhythm of "Your Words". The sonic attack continues with the brilliant "Incinerate", re-mixed for inclusion here.

Then, beginning with a bass line intro reminiscent of the early Minor Threat catalog, "Throwing Darts" brings the band up to date with a song dealing with confrontational people who hide behind their computer screens. "White Flag," "Twisted Again," "Average Man," and "Wasting Away" round out the album with some of the best punk rock songwriting I've heard since the '80s. Just when you think it's over, the fun continues with the hidden track "100 Punks." A cover of the original song by Generation X, you can almost see the smiles on the band member's faces as the track unfolds.

"Minority of One" is one of those rare instances where you can tell that a once-famous band has gotten back together for all the right reasons. This is no attempt at nostalgia money. This album was put together through time, effort, and love. Produced by Brian Baker and Steve Hansgen (also a one-time Minor Threat bassist), this album sounds like butter. Engineered at the infamous Inner Ear Studios by longtime Dischord stalwart Don Zientara, you just can't beat the production.

It's not slick, it's not garage... it's somewhere in between. The artwork on the package by Jason Farrell is equally impressive, bridging the gap between the band's past imagery and an up-to-date style he frequently uses for Dischord Records. After listening to this album a few times over, it seems to me that it would definitely be a shame if these guys didn't at least do a couple of shows to promote this thing. With Dag Nasty's first two Dischord albums having just been re-mastered and re-released, and this fine return effort being put forth. . . there will never be a better time for people unfamiliar with Dag Nasty to become acquainted with one of punk rocks truly great bands. Do yourself a favor, and pick this disc up pronto. . .and while you're at it, take a look into the making of this album and bring yourself up to speed on the minutia of the band by visiting their official site at www.daghouse.com.

- Matt Kozlowski

Dead And Gone

The Beautician
GSL
www.GSL.com



In the three years since their last release, the Bay Area's Dead and Gone have become a decidedly different, evolving band. Gone is the producer of their last two records, Green Day's Billie Joe Armstrong. The band produced "The Beautician" themselves and the results are sonically murkier, which creates a rougher sounding edge, which the band uses to their advantage. Stylistically, the group has grown into a fiercely menacing band evolving from their earlier thrash/punk style into tight noise-rock unit.

The music is dark and powerful, at times the songs pummel like a heavy Jesus Lizard and other times are reminiscent of the slow, spooky style of the Laughing Hyenas. The rhythm-driven intricacies of drummer Joey Perales and bassist Brian Stern mix well with haunting Roland Howard-esque guitar work of guitarist Rockey Crane providing a background to the hardcore snarling of vocalist Shane Baker, whose lyrics range from depression to desperation to violence. Luckily the lyrics, which by themselves can be described as "goth-like," are included so you can understand what Baker's shouting about.

Dead And Gone are best described as a cross between The Birthday Party and early Neurosis. At times they are in full-blown punk rock attack mode, and at others the songs swirl off into calculatedly abstract Sonic Youth-like dissonant guitar weirdness. The band has also added keyboards to broaden their sound but they do not take away from the attack, just add another layer to the dark and evil music.

-Jason Ziemniak

Denali

Denali
Jade Tree, 2002
www.jadetree.com



Odds are good that you will find this album right next to Portishead's first album in the CD collections of girls that don't listen to this style of music normally. Stylistically, Denali vocalist Maura Davis has a voice which is similar to that of Portishead's Beth Gibbons, that's not what I'm getting at. The reason why you will find this CD mixed in with the Eagles Greatest Hits, Nickleback, and Steve Miller is because Denali is a sex album just like Portishead's is. Meet the new Barry White for the alternative nation.

Musically, the album is pseudo trip-hopish but has more of a driving rock beat, perhaps due to having a real drummer in the mix. Alan Weatherhead and Mark Linkous of Sparklehorse are both involved, with Weatherhead engineering and Linkous doing select production on the record. Similar to Engine Down (the band that Denali shares two members with), the music is complexly played, yet simplistic in feel, their deceptive grace is easily one of the bands defining factors and a testament to the age old saying that less can be more. Davis' vocals dominate the sound. Her

opera-trained voice carries a passionate, powerful confidence.

The CD also contains a video for the song, "Relief" which is low budget but creepy in a Silence of the Lambs-type way.

-Jason Ziemniak

Aiyb Dieng

Rhythmagick

Subharmonic, 1999

www.axiom-records.com/subhar.html

The African dub of Rhythmagick features the crisp, fluid ethnic percussion of Trilok Gurtu matching the talking drum, congas and more of master percussionist Aiyb Dieng. Reeds are played by Pharaoh Sanders. Of course, the serpentine cosmic jazz from Sanders' tenor saxophone shows up, but Sanders also plays the full, Arabic-sounding double reed North African oboe known as a ghaïta, a type of shawm. (Inexplicably, Sanders is credited with "metal and wood flutes.") Also adding to this album are two additional bata players: Daniel Ponce and Carlos Cordova. Their brisk, percolating beats on that double-headed drum add to the rich, layers of percussion. That layering is the plastic sonic mosaic one comes to expect from a Bill Laswell production. Laswell himself is on hand for deep, trademark "low bass" while Bootsy Collins adds a touch of psychedelic soul guitar and "Space Bass." The high, melodic timbres are not abandoned, but just subtly understated through effective treatment on the 6- and 12-string guitars from master of the frets, Nicky Skopelitis. Bernie Worrell adds melody and rhythms to this afro-dub beat creation on Hammond B-3 and Clavinet ^ the keyboard of funk. Primarily an instrumental album, vocals that are present come from street-poet and rap forefather Umar Bin Hassan (The Last Poets).

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Sorcha Dorcha

Nil s-sat ach amad-in

Hearthside Music

www.sorchadorcha.com

It's been said of New York that you can find most of the world's great cuisines here, though not necessarily the best. Something along those lines is also true of the world's musics. Somewhere in this town someone is working some groove out, defining or re-defining music, in ways both traditional and otherwise.

Some definitions conform more to tradition than others; some re-definitions conform more to creativity than others. But it's all feeding and drawing from other traditions present in that which is sometimes the Urban smelting pot.

In the middle of this Naked City, a city of the even more naked heart, musician Lorcan Otway has put together a group, Sorcha Dorcha, and seemingly embarked upon the task of fashioning musical art and recasting the traditions of Irish music in light of his experience both as a contemporary musicmaker and as a man with an awareness of tradition and a personal faith. As possibly only an Irishman can or might wish to, Lorcan Otway argues lyrically at length with the ironies of both

martyrdom and history, writing of genocides, cultural and physical, in both the old world and the new.

In his constructed descant with History, Otway exhibits what he also learned from another tradition, of more local breeding, that of the singer-songwriter, the composer of the personal ballad, and fuses that tradition with the tradition of Anglo-Celtic music to tell tales with meaning both about and for history.

Lorcan Otway and Sorcha Dorcha have taken traditional Irish melodies, some original compositions in traditional modes, put original lyrics to most, and come up with an amazing little album entitled Nil s-sat ach amad-in, a CD of no small fun and some humour with a healthy dose of good old kick up your heels danceability.

- Bruce M. Foster

DSP

In the Red

Ninja Tune Records

www.ninjatune.com?

I like the production of the beats behind DSP; minimal, compressed, blast-able. The lyrics hold promise for the first few minutes. They sometimes devolve into too-predictable assertions of supremacy, but that seems to be standard for modern hip-hop (with which I am acquainted, and about which I am no expert).

"Where Is It" has interesting lyrics about what it's like to be a female rapper. "Outta place" decries BET (Black Entertainment Television) and MTV-copying personalities, and tangentially stresses the importance of being original and thinking for yourself. But both songs quickly devolve into better-than-you-ism. <Yawn>.

DSP are creative people with musical talent; I hope they continue to work on their lyrics. Chill Rob G is interesting on "Bullshit" and "Imagine That," but the let's-stay-in-bed-and-fuck words of "Way Past Noon" are disappointing. If they're meant to be funny, I don't get it, and if they're meant to promote a lifestyle, I don't want it.

-Bruce Bullis

Electric Highlife

Sessions from the Bokoor Studios

Naxos World

Highlife is a catch-all term for dance music from Ghana and eastern Nigeria. It began when the poor of Ghana copied the brass band and orchestra music they heard and mixed it with folk songs and native rhythms. Over the years it has developed its own sound and now has its own place in the Afropop canon.

This compilation covers releases from the semi open air Bokoor Studio built in 1982. There are variations in the thirteen cuts and eight bands presented but they share the same essentials.

Vocal chanting and one or more guitars are at the front of the mix. The chant (only the last cut uses English) is a phrase or two repeated by a singer, or it may be in a call and response format, where one



vocalist will trade off with others who are harmonizing. The guitars are frequently the only melodic instruments, usually played with complex repeating patterns. Bass and sometimes keyboards are present but hardly heard. The rhythm is taken by a variety of drum and percussion instruments.

These songs are much easier to get used to than you might think. The multiple rhythms and lead guitar have a similarity to reggae. The eight pages of liner notes translate the phrases and give a history of the music and each band.

The most appealing thing here is the upbeat feeling and optimism. Some of the themes are "Our family is suffering" or "I am stranded and nothing is working." The music is for dancing, though, both to make the listeners forget their troubles and to feel that they are not alone.

The songs have a light feeling. The guitars are of the Jerry Garcia mode, played with single note runs devoid of heavy effects. There are no blues growls or moans. The men (there are a few women on background vocals) sing energetically. And the polyrhythms keep everything moving at a fast pace.

Actually, I suppose singing over patterns and rhythms does not make this too distant from rap. The biggest difference is that, unlike a lot of rap, there is no malice on this record at all. This one is already one of my favorites - I have to deal with enough malice as it is.

- Dave Howell

The Flying Luttenbachers

Retrospektiw IV

The Mountain Collective for

Independent Artists, 2002

www.mtncia.com



Multi-instrumentalist, composer, improviser, and drummer Weasel Walter is the only constant in the rotating cast of players on this CD which collects live, alternate takes and unreleased material from the various Luttenbacher line-ups from 1996-2000. The Luttenbachers touch upon the genres and attitudes inherent in free jazz, death metal, and punk rock. They prioritize speed, velocity, and harshness and avoid obvious rhythmic or melodic constraints, thereby creating weird and complex music.

The two different line-ups presented in this "retrospektiw" are the drum/bass/guitar "satanic" trio and the formation that followed, which was a largely free-improvised affair consisting of drums/sax/cello/contrabass.

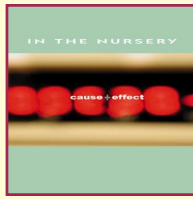
I wouldn't really consider the trio music "noise" per se: it is noisy, but the songs are tightly composed - think Sun Ra meets Black Flag, while the "free"-era, even with all-acoustic instrumentation, the music is just as hard-hitting, though not as structured.

For listeners new to the Luttenbachers, this is a good CD to pick up to see what past era of the Luttenbachers you like the best because as one never to stay stagnant, Walter has recruited two new players and has yet again moved in a new direction which can be described as "brutal prog" and has a new release on Troubleman Unlimited.

-Jason Ziemniak

In The Nursery

Cause + Effect
ITN Corporation
www.inthenursery.com

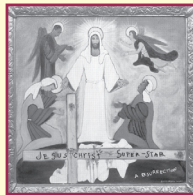


Cause + Effect is a collection of In The Nursery remixes especially commissioned by the group and exclusive to this album. After over twenty years of creating, there was much to choose from for this project. Attrition, Flesh Field, Faith & the Muse and more are among the elect that recreate the songs culled from the In The Nursery catalog. In The Nursery themselves contribute their version of Joy Division's "Love Will Tear us Apart." Very successful in getting their music into films and often performing to silent classics, their compositional electronica has an evocative, impressionistic, cinematic sweep. (Note that only a few of these tracks are actually from pieces used in films, like "Miracle Road" from XXL and Underground.) After the reincarnation by other artists, these pieces retain that suggestive, emotional and image-building character that makes the group's music so enduring and memorable.

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Jesus Christ Superstar

A Resurrection
Daemon Records



With everything else receiving a tribute, it was only a matter of time before JCS was revisited. Feelings may differ about this work – some may revere it for launching the success of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, while others may revile it for the same reason. There is even a little hesitation about this project expressed in producer Michael Lorant's liner notes, which end with, "I'm not crazy. I'm not crazy."

This was not a crazy idea, though, for even if doing a musical on the subject of Jesus was pretentious, most of the music has held up since the original album was released in 1970 (it predated the stage show for fear of controversy).

This CD, recorded after the cast put together a live show for a music conference, is more of a rock than a Broadway version, and is much better for it. Different bands perform different songs, including Lorant's own Big Fish Ensemble. Since these are mostly alternative, it has a darker tone, which fits the story – JCS does not even include the usual uplifting ending of the resurrection.

A good example is "King Herod's Song". The original was done in a vaudeville style. The 1973 film featured an awful version with an overweight guy playing a "comic" Herod. This CD features Lorant's band with added electric violin, baritone horns, and bass clarinets in an interesting but straightforward take.

Using different groups gives a variety of textures that the original did not have. They are all obscure but respected, a sign of quality in today's music. It is certainly the case here.

It's not entirely fair (though true) to say that this version of the CD takes second place to the original, since it would be very difficult to outshine Ian Gillian

as Jesus and Murray Head as Judas. Gillian is best known for being Deep Purple's lead vocalist during their peak on such classics as "Highway Star" and "Space Truckin'."

Lorant cannot really be expected to compete as Judas with the memory of Head, a prodigy who has also been a filmmaker and actor. But using Indigo Girls Amy Ray as Jesus and Emily Saliers as Mary Magdalene is a curious choice.

It certainly shows that things have come a long way. If Webber had cast those two as lovers forty years ago, they might have crucified him. Unfortunately, the two of them sound pretty much like the Indigo Girls. This leaves the listener to wonder why they were cast. Lorant does not explain in the liner notes, not even to say, "I am crazy. I am crazy."

The bottom line on this is how much you liked the original. If you did, this will be a welcome reunion. If not, you will not want to listen to it even for thirty pieces of silver.

- Dave Howell

Patricia Kaas

Piano Bar
Columbia
www.patriciaikaas.net



"There are, of course, in all periods all kinds of countenances, but only one type will be singled by a period's taste as its ideal image of happiness and beauty while all the other faces do their best to copy it, and with the help of fashion and hairdressers even the ugly ones manage to approximate the ideal. But there are some faces that never succeed, faces born to a strange distinction of their own, unyieldingly expressing the regal and banished ideal beauty of an earlier period." - Robert Musil, The Man Without Qualities

Patricia Kaas, a princess of French popular song, on her release Piano Bar, an album of fourteen classic songs, is playing advocate for a formerly glorious but now somewhat decadent bastion of the aspirations of post-war European culturali, the French chanson.

Once upon a time a genre that struggled to provide some framework for the emotional extremities of Edith Piaf, for the poetic imagery of Jacques Brel, its best days seem behind it. Its thunder stolen by the less complex tropes of Americanist pop, it is a genre that now provides mostly songs for movies, though these are the themes of some of the most memorable cinematic romances of prior decades.

What Kaas brings to this admirable, if uneven collection of song is a voice and manner that speaks to some ambivalence towards the often babbling, demotic maw of pop. No foamy nonces disintegrating in the Klieg-lit day, coupled with hooks baited to catch passing schools of nabobs, a certain coolness and restraint of impulse prevails here.

With muted trumpets and snakey bass lines, reminiscent of some Phyllie Soul love fest, Mlle. Kaas attempts no breakout hits, possibly because it can't always be about breaking out; sometimes it must be about being within. Mustn't it?

- Bruce M. Foster

KMFDM

Attak
Metropolis
www.metropolis-records.com



A large part of success of KMFDM's music and certainly preset here is the juxtaposition of technically superb female vocals that could fuel a good pop song with a blunt substrate of industrial rock. In that tough foundation of brutal guitar sounds is the undeniable pounding rhythms of good beat music. Following on 18 years of recording (11 albums) and tours (a dozen preceded Attak), Sascha Konietzko's sonic output follows a remarkably consistent and uncompromising arc arriving here at a Foetus-like assault with a strong melodic streak. Sascha dismantled the band in 1999 and after using the moniker MDFMK, reinvented the group on the original formula, which may account for much of the strength and freshness of this disc. Here, KMFDM's starts over and reinvents itself. Sascha himself regarded this album on Metropolis as created in the non-restrictive creative atmosphere that marked the early days of Wax Trax! and KMFDM's excellent work at that time.

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Lack

Blues Moderne: Danois Explosifs
Earth Water Sky Connection



Relentless and punishing. These words come to mind as the needle hits the record and rises off it when the songs have run their pummeling course. I found myself slamming an imaginary drum set in my car, arms flailing wildly and a grin even more crazed gracing my face, as I blasted this from the stereo. Lack take the best elements of the mosh-inducing bonehead hardcore metal sound and fuse them with creative guitar riffs and diverse rhythms to meld a distinct thick, crunching sound. A throat-shredding singer screams over the din, spewing forth a litany of words much in the spirit of the Situationists, Crimethinc and other such lovers of unhinged passion. Though I've heard comparisons to metal-core titans Botch, pre- "Shape of Punk to Come" Refused seems more appropriate. But who needs comparisons? Lack do not lack an ability to craft seriously intense, pounding rockers topped with intelligent, well yelled lyrics, words that inspire and evoke thought. How often can that be said of a punk rock band with metal overtones? The vocalist is at one point hopeful, determined: "One word silently whispered between my lips: freedom," "Show me you're alive," But then he becomes skeptical, questioning those who have come before and failed or surrendered: "Are we changing the times? Are these flames of discontent really firestorms to purify? Have we lost our will to tear down the walls, burn the flags and start again?", "It's like being buried alive when our ideals become our tombstones." In the end, he vows to do more, be more, to, in the words of the Situationists, vivre sans temps morte: "I want my death to be a party. A celebration. A toast for the living of life."

-Casey Boland

L'Altra

In the Afternoon

Aesthetic Records, 2002

www.aesthetics-usa.com

Following on "Music of a Sinking Occasion," L'Altra raised the bar for themselves

in arrangements and sophistication on this ambitious release. Strongly song-oriented and featuring vocal duets from the group's vocalists Lindsay Anderson and Joseph Costa, this album is also very interesting sonically. Even without vocals, these tracks would stand instrumentally. Modern electronic techniques come from Marc Hellner, one half of Pulseprogramming. A solid, alt-country foundation comes from upright bass and understated drums while the reed and trumpet arrangements add a classic jazz feel. This is the group's final record with bassist Ken Dyber, Aesthetics owner, due to a geographical move on Dyber's part. L'Altra continues to mature and develop as an impressive ensemble with solid songs. Guest musicians here include jazz cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm (Flying Luttenbachers), Robert Cruz on accordion (Sinister Luck Ensemble), Charles Kim on pedal steel (Pinetop Seven, Boxhead Ensemble). Additionally we hear Todd Matei on guitar (Joan of Arc), Joe Grimm on trumpet (33.3) and more on this instrumentally rich opus.

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte



Life at Sea

Anchor Down CDEP

World Won't Listen Records

www.worldwontlisten.com

I've been listening to these songs as mp3s for a couple months now, so it was a wonderful treat to watch them bridge the digital divide in such a nice format. Packaged in a hand-screened cardboard sleeve with an vinyl anchor sticker, "Anchor Down" delivers three songs that will leave you undoubtedly wanting more. For me, I'd much rather be wanting more from a band's release than wonder why there are six songs on a full-length that seem only partially-developed.

The first track on this debut, "Sink," sets the stage with a solid rock foundation that dips its toes in the ethereal world of dreampop. The second track, "Your New Constitution," is the nucleus of this effort as an epic journey that layers crashing waves behind the jangly guitars and vocals that transport you to the bow of a ship in distress. The last track, "Invisible," takes you to another plane with hauntingly dissonant vocals that send you soaring in the sky just before the chorus brings you down and dashes you against the rocks. This is phenomenally well-paced, calculated, and blissful. They've already been compared to the likes of Fugazi, My Bloody Valentine, and The Police, but I would undoubtedly say that they are akin to the late great Three Mile Pilot in so many ways.

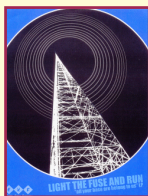
-Jason Kucsma

Light the Fuse and Run

All Your Base Are Belong to Us

Exotic Fever Records

One mid-spring evening I found



myself weary and hopeless at a ramshackle show way down South. Hunger howled in my belly as lethargy pounded at my consciousness. Then a group of five guys from Virginia set up shabby-looking equipment and proceeded to awaken my excitement and explode my misconceptions about the current state of underground loud rock music. The name says it all. This band wants to detonate a stagnating society, a bored punk rock scene, their own lives of wanting and waiting but not willing to settle for wanting, waiting, stagnation or boredom anymore. They take up the traditional instruments and cajole from them familiar sounds. Yet the band careens forth on sheer power alone. The visceral charge of every song on the record propels one to take up arms, their own or any other to rectify the wrongs around them. The spirit of Rites of Spring infects the music, while a hint of Swiz peppers the vocals. Yet Light the Fuse possess their own rousing brand of righteous rock. Included for good measure are an acoustic interlude, a few squiggly electronic bursts and a moody, jazz sample of Dave Brubeck. This band smokes in the live setting and manages to commit the fire to vinyl. Essential for fans of riveting rock music whom think bands these days have nothing to say.

-Casey Boland

Ed Littman, guitar

Splatt

Yeahman Records

www.edlittman.com



There are many ways to enter God's house. Some have entered via the front door. Contemporary guitarists who play the improvised music known as jazz are quite likely to have followed their muse in from some part of the house, probably the garage.

Apprenticeships served in garage bands; oftentimes 'reformed' complexity junkies grown into men who never lost that urge to search for the right chord, the perfect beat, their instrumental masters are likely to be any one of a number of guitar players, such as Jeff Beck, or, maybe from a slightly younger generation, Andy Summers.

Call it my reading of the overall ambience, but there is something about guitarist Ed Littman's CD Splatt that tells me he was possibly a fan of Jeff Beck. It's the delicious inconsistency of a music that never lands anywhere for long but that it finds something of interest to hear and to speak of to those with ears to hear. Harmonic memories of Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, Link Wray, and the Ventures run naked through some Sergio Leone-style construct abound, combine with a sense of delight and exigency.

Case in point, track one, "Trip-Op," is some crabwalk bass-line, cross-fertilised affair, that I listened to about ten times before I went on to the balance of the CD. Walking, slow-dancing, strolling down some avenue in Anytown, USA: it's a vignette of life in some serpentine urban dream realm. It is as near to perfect track as I have heard of late.

Track two, "Grind It," another high point, and one of those 'too cool for school' riff-driven blues ideas. The basic riff repeats along a simple harmonic progression with well more than able support from

bassist Danny Zanker and drummer John Dollinger.

This one stays in the player.

- Bruce M. Foster

Noise Ratchet

Till we have faces

The Militia Group

www.themilitiagroup.com



About a year ago these guys played at a community college I was attending up in San Diego. It was probably the only band that played the Thursday afternoon show, which I thought would go on to better things. A year or more has passed since that day and I have in my hands their CD "Till we have faces", out on The Militia Group who have signed bands like Rufio who seem to be opening for all the cool bands lately, Veronica and Tora,Tora,Torrance among others. The press kit says that they have been compared to the likes of Sunny Day Real Estate and Jimmy Eat World. Being unfamiliar with Sunny Day and very familiar with Jimmy Eat World I would say that it has a J.E.W. feel to it, which I think is well represented by the guitar work done by Molina and Lothspeich although its not out of this world. The rhythm section however is not very strong. Some moments seem pretty empty and if you have been into other similar bands with a really strong rhythm section you sort of feel that void at times.

After the end of the first song some overdubbing was done and you get this saturated fuzz which I thought was an error, but I guess its part of the song. Some lyrics are pretty corny and with "emo" written all over it, but these guys can get away with it most of the time. Especially with a cool voice like Hosler's. I'm sure that fans of bands like Hot Rod Circuit, Further Seems Forever/Dashboard Confessional and Midtown could definitely get into it. Older JEW fans might not dig it as much as newer fans. Noise Ratchet's sound is unique which is not an easy task for the genre. Its emo/grunge guitars with catchy hooks and powerful vocals. I'm sure these guys will be doing well in the future and seem to have a good grasp on the Christian-emo-punk scene.

The design is pretty sweet and the choice of paper would have been mine also for the insert. It's very colorful and has the songs hand-written like some melancholy poet's notepad. I did think that the pictures of the guys on each panel was unnecessary and that because the paper is so porous it sacrifices print quality. Nevertheless its a good CD and if you're into the bands I mentioned be sure to check this out!

- Pablo Doderio

onlinedrawing

Visitor

Jade Tree

www.jadetree.com



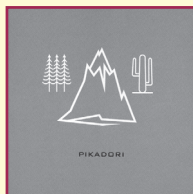
Onlinedrawing is the solo project of singer/songwriter Jonah Matranga former member of indie band Far. This release is Matranga's first full length release from Jade Tree on the heels of his four self released EPs. With 11 short songs of honest and emotionally charged lyrics, "Visitor" does not

deviate too far from the trademark sound of his previous EPs. The production consists of a very sparse accompaniment of guitar, piano, and drum machine that never overwhelms nor distracts the listener from the main focus of the music: the vocals. The combination of guitar and drum machine work well together (“Bitte Ein Kuss”). However, when the latter is removed (“Why are we fighting”), the sound can be a little too bare. The really sparse pieces work well on their own, but not in the context of the album. Highlights include the sweet pleading of “Smile,” the super catchy chorus of “Softbelly,” and the bitterness of “Yr Letter.” Except for the occasional filler track, most of the songs on the album sound great individually. Because of a lack of uniformity, this album would probably work better if it were released as 2 individual EPs.

-Terence Lo

Pikadori

Hope Records, 2001
www.hoperecords.com



Pikadori is a four-piece band that comes to you from Pittsburgh, PA. Their debut release takes you on a journey through great guitar tones and melodies along with many changes, backed with a hard driving drumbeat with a hint of distorted bass tones. All seven songs on this record go through different chords and patterns and just explore every aspect of their musical talents. With a sound that resembles bands like Piebald and Cursive, these guys are definitely a great addition to the whole Emo scene. Songs such as Mission Statement and Model Nothing set the entire mood and pace for the whole album as well as the band itself. Pikadori is definitely going to make an impression on the Punk community.

-Nathan S Linville

Prefuse 73

The '92 vs. '02 Collection
Warp
www.warprecords.com



Scott Herren returns with a new EP following the release of his critically acclaimed “Vocal Studies + Uprock Narratives” album in 2001 which successfully juxtaposed the sound of modern IDM with instrumental hip hop. The title of the EP seems to suggest that this is a collection of remixed tracks but that is hardly the case. Containing four new tracks, the EP manages to ebb and flow nicely as a collective. The overall mood is mellow and is more reminiscent of the works from Ninja Tune’s “Cinematic Orchestra” than Herren’s previous LP which showcased his style of sudden breaks and vocal cutups. The first song, “Desks Pencils Bottles,” begins with a rhythmic interlude created with the objects mentioned in the title. A fuzzy hip hop beat then appears and constantly mutates itself through rhythm and time signature changes. By combining the sound of almost classic jazz instrumentals with electronic glitches, the second track manages to sound remarkably futuristic and retro

at the same time. Although the EP clocks in at just over 16 minutes, tracks are excellent. Expect to see Herren’s next release sometime next year. If it’s anything like this EP, fans will have a lot to look forward to.

-Terence Lo

Puffy AmiYumi

An Illustrated History
Bar/None Records
www.bar-none.com

Puffy AmiYumi is everything you should hate, but don’t even try. It’s impossible to resist their twisted, ultra-cute appeal. Consider it giddy, dialectical retribution for 50 years of American pop imperialism.

“An Illustrated History,” their second US release, sounds like every American hit song since World War II. I mean that literally: every song — played, if not simultaneously, then at least in very rapid succession. It’s an insane collage so dense that little is specifically identifiable, even though every riff is tip-of-the-tongue familiar. It’s like listening to your car radio scan through ELO, the Beach Boys, T. Rex, Henry Mancini, the Sex Pistols, and the Go-Gos in under a minute.

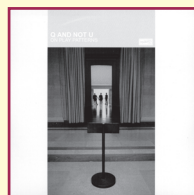
Why choose among styles when you can have them all? “An Illustrated History” moves effortlessly from Who power chords to Disco perfection to melodies lifted straight from a Johnny Mathis Christmas carol — sometimes in a single song. What keeps it from sounding like a dada car crash or Pluderphonic outtake is that everything gets run through a 1960s-girl-group machine that melts it down into a single, joyous wall of sound. It isn’t that these particular girls are retro in any way — except in the sense that they’re everything in every way. Instead, imagine the Ronnettes or the Shirelles teleported into a sci fi future where mad producers get busy downloading the entire history of western music into their brains.

Now they want your brain. Chances are they’ll get it. Back home, they’re *idoru* (idols). They’ve sold 14 million records and have their own TV show, clothing lines, and Puffy AmiYumi action figures. It may not be long before they — with hyperbolic, cartoonish enthusiasm — follow more literally animated Japan-Pop phenomena like Pokémon and Hello Kitty to take the country by storm. Don’t worry: it won’t hurt a bit.

-Charles Weigl

Q and Not U

On Play Patterns
Dischord Records



Dischord Records stands as the beacon of hope and inspiration for most practitioners of all that is independent and DIY. I must admit my adherence to the near infallibility of this label, an avatar of all that is right and true in the Independent Way. Though some may bemoan its less traditional punk rock, loud, fast, rules direction, Q and Not U is reason enough to know the label remains committed to disseminating bracing and crucial music. The band does more with two songs than most bands do with entire careers. “Animal Calls” rocks out in a vaguely familiar, slightly

Fugazi-esque fashion. Yet a unique personality shines through. The vocals soar along the single-note guitar line, and the instruments coalesce into a perfect catchy rock anthem. A powerful, immense song. “Soft Pyramids” shifts to a more somber, funky, sexy mood (yes indeed, sexy). The quiet, crooning singing defies expectations. The Uh-huhs really make the song. With a steady, infectious danceable rhythm and a smattering of keyboard and other percussive elements, the song offers a glimpse of what can be done with terse musical elements in the same way Gang of Four, Wire or the Minutemen had. The Future of Rock?

-Casey Boland

Silvio Rodriguez

Expedición
onomusic
www.fonomusic.com



In Expedición, Cuban songwriter-singer Silvio Rodriguez has crafted a small wonder of an album; containing twelve original compositions; each a finely nuanced moment out of time.

Previously introduced into this market by David Byrne’s Luaka Bop label, Silvio Rodriguez is a Cuban artist who shies away from little, including what might be dubbed mere recklessness in an artist in the American popular mode: a desire to take beauty on its own terms; a lack of concern with grandiosity or bluster; a disregard for an image of a false populism. His ambitions result in art of finely crafted gestures.

Working in a trans-national tradition of Latin balladry, informed by the popular and high arts, one that produced the likes of Mercedes Sosa, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil, Silvio Rodriguez writes songs in his native tongue that project a translucent integrity and intensity of purpose.

Expedición was produced for the Latin market, only recently noticed by the satraps of the major labels. From out of the resulting hooaha and hoopla, a monochromatic picture of a panoply of complex cultures emerged, one reduced to the common elements of pounding rhythms and vibrating anatomy. But that’s the pop business model: Flesh And Fantasy For The Masses. We knew that going in.

I have little in the way of objections to either rhythm or anatomy, they are after all pretty damn popular in my house. But I also like songs written in keys other than C and in meters other than common. My rice and beans get cooked in ways that take more than a minute.

I could say that Rodriguez’s rhythms are “gonna get you,” but these rhythms, and his rhymes as well, are creatures of a sly intent, far more likely to draw you in quietly. And completely.

-Bruce M. Foster.

Teddy Duchamp’s Army

Hope Records, 2001
www.hoperecords.com



From the hard rocking beat of the opening track JFK to the more melodic and upbeat sounds of New Moog, Teddy

Duchamp's Army is definitely a force to be reckoned with. This five-piece group comes out of Pittsburgh, PA with their six-song debut release packed with all the sounds of the uprising Punk/Emo movement. Even while leaving no obscure "Stand by Me" reference unturned the band still has time to put some originality in their music such as the rather campy tune called One Big Hollywood, which in today's rather bland music scene is hard to come by. So if your in to melodic guitar riffs with a bit of a bite and some hard rock influenced drum beats, as in the last song The Pulse of The Corporate Humanoid with the drum solo at the end, check it out. Teddy Duchamp's Army does in twenty short minutes what most bands couldn't do in an hour.

-Nathan S Linville

Various Artists

The Best of Lounge Music
Atoll Music
www.atollmusic.com



The earthwork remains of mound building cultures, ensconced in the pine forests of the central and southern tiers, are as close as we get to Chartres Cathedral around here. Brought down from days of glory by a tag-team of grave robbers and a historical revisionism of American self-referential reverence for the Never Was, not much impact remains to those remnants of other men who worshipped other gods.

The cliché of Chartres, that unidentifiable stone mason marching off into a beclouded Oblivion, content with a role in that interplay of forces called history, where devilry is in mere detail, well, never was that us, now was it? Tramping down a ramp, dutifully descending into the dustbin of history? Nope, not this lot.

Everyday we dissolve two tabula rasas into some foamy, collective obsession with Hoppalong Cassidy lunch-milk glasses filled with the milk of purple cows. Left by some gender-bent Clarabell, off to pursue a career in media relations, poor Howdy copes as best he might. The domestic soundtrack swells to meet the rising expectations of raging egos, Cajun moon, where does your power lie? As you move across the summer sky. You took my baby way too soon. What have you done, Cajun Moon?

And some home-bred Piaf delivers a slap across the cheek, slicing away at expectations of romantic fulfillment. The bluesy refrain coupled with gospel chorus; a home-cooked Qwaali with electronic fills merged into a downbeat abasement, before which even the most cold-hearted Apache dancer's heart would melt.

This is two CD's of Euro-pop, dubbed lounge music by fiat of outraged self-definition. A cross-cultural product of the hubris of the Treaty of Rome, implanted by act of will into some retail outlet on a street near yours.

- Bruce M. Foster

Various Artists

CQ: Original Soundtrack Album
Emperor Norton, 2002
www.emperornorton.com



The idea behind the film CQ is to make a film in 2001 set in 1969 Paris as a futuristic look forward to 2001. This is the directorial debut of Roman Coppola, son of Francis Coppola. As one would expect from an early work from a creative mind, Coppola goes to the essence of this thought, even down to the music collected in this soundtrack. There are a couple of true French pop hits from that period by Claude Francois and Jacque Dutronc. Most of the music, through, was recorded today as a reverse engineered time capsule from Mellow, a group cut from the same cloth as Air. The lush string and brass sections and faint but psychedelic guitar are the musical adornment. Some tracks are instrumental and the rest feature youthful and innocently sexual vocals. CQ is a transport back to that time.

-Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Various Artists

Friction Records Compilation
CD Volume 1
Friction Records
www.frictiongoods.com



Samplers are like a box of chocolates... Okay, ignore that analogy. I don't want a lawsuit at this point in my brief writing career. Imagine, though, that a somewhat slow-talking guy with a penchant for running had completed it for me, and you get the idea of how I feel about receiving any sampler from any label whose music I had never heard before. Okay, that analogy really sucked. Sorry.

One nice thing about this sampler from Friction Records, in particular, is its diversity. From a great trip-hop opening act to the worst, most generic grindcore and emo I have ever heard, there's something for everyone other than maybe TRL fans on here. Hell, maybe even they would appreciate the emo stuff.

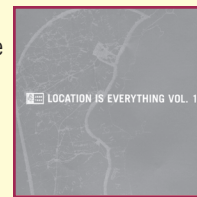
There IS some good stuff floating around on the CD, though. The opener, Enon, drops some very cool, collected music with their take on trip-hop 2002. Two Stars Burning Sun shined with some tremendously diverse metal-meets-grindcore-meets-shoegazer-meets-something-else. Other highlights include 1984, Hunter Rose, the Deftones-flavored Duress, Wrecker, the sickening power-surf-pop of Night Doctors, and Birth with their Coltrane-fueled screaming saxophones.

Unfortunately, the good things are way overshadowed by some of the most boring, formulaic emo and grindcore that I have ever heard. Nothing really sucks, though. Everything on this sampler is relatively well-produced, and the disk is mastered well enough. Hell, they even sent me a sticker of Don Knotts (a killer takeoff on the cover art from Danzig's first album), and if there's ANY way a band could suck up to a reviewer like me, it's sending out a sticker. Yes, I am that shallow.

-Jeremy Mahler

Various Artists

Location is Everything Volume 1
Jade Tree Records
www.jadetree.com



The title of this compilation, "Location is Everything," seems to underscore how important the Jade Tree name has become in the independent music world. Once known mostly for big names like the Promise Ring, Joan of Arc, and Jets to Brazil (all of whom appear here), Jade Tree is now (or perhaps, has always been) embracing bands (such as Zero Zero and Trial By Fire) that couldn't, or wouldn't, come close to emo if their life depended on it.

A good compilation has songs that both sound great in isolation and make the listener want to hear more (after all, even indie labels want to sell more CD's right?). This one succeeds on both counts. The Promise Ring's "Emergency! Emergency!" is certainly as good a song as any to introduced the uninitiated to their amazing pop goodness, and Zero Zero's "Back to Hell" confirmed my suspicion that they were a band I'd love to check out. Milemarker's two tracks combine melodic keyboards with raspy guitars beautifully, and the contributions by Pedro the Lion (aka David Bazan) reassert the intensely gripping nature of his songwriting.

Not all is amazing on this comp. The tracks by Girls Against Boys made me wonder why a band like this could be described by their label as one of "the label's most recognized bands" — one would think that such a reputation would be warranted, and it sure doesn't seem like it from these tracks.

New End Original's "Lukewarm" dangerously flirts with flavor-or-the-month hookiness, and the Promise Ring's "Easy," while amusing for a fan like me, seems to point out the reason why some songs go unreleased.

Samples of R2D2 on Onlinedrawing's "Smile," two quality songs by Mighty Flashlight, and great tracks by Owls and Euphone also are highlights.

When all is said and done, this compilation serves to further show the diversity of bands on Jade Tree's roster. With that in mind, I can't help but thinking that some of these artists would not be very well-known if not for the fact that they are on Jade Tree. I guess location is everything, indeed.

There are seven previously unreleased tracks as well as sixteen tracks culled from various Jade Tree releases on this album.

-Jim Withington

Various Artists

Paris Lounge 2
Wagram
www.musicrama.com



"What's the most important thing? ... Necessity ... People do what is most necessary to them at any given moment." - Archie Gates, Three Kings (1999)

Having long since come to prefer the disarming, charming fraud to the overly intent and honest junge man, my amusement with collections such as this

should surprise no one. If nothing else is true, at least I can perceive an evolutionary necessity for a lack of honesty.

I am certain that Oscar Wilde might have appreciated the thought. Unfortunately mere honesty may have no future. It then falls to individuals to figure out upon whom the impact of this lack of a motive forward will fall. That one can be more than nerve-racking, and not at all pleasant. (And please, don't get your panties in a bunch with the thought that I like that immoderate Nature might favor the lounge lizard. The mere thought of it appalls me too.)

Cobbled together from strands of musical DNA, sonorous memes in search of a notion of home, chromosomal material in search of a squat, if these constructs had been the result of other than sonic engineering conducted under strict laboratory conditions, we would probably be faced with the horrors of some talking jellyfish. Thank you, Modern Technology, for dodging that bullet.

But instead of a phalanx of Frankenstein's monsters, bolts all shiny, daintily sipping tea from china cups at the breakfast table, we have two CD's composed of trip-hopping beats and grooves, asynchronous tonal tracts suspended in musical time, somehow speaking to the need for a background into which Life at its most basic can sink. Trans-national sonic wallpaper? Well, maybe. But have you ever seen what Matisse could do with a decent stretch of wallpaper on a breezy, moon-lit summer night?

- Bruce M. Foster

Various Artists

Revelation 100: A Fifteen Year Retrospective of Rare Recordings

Revelation Records

www.revelationrecords.com



"Revelation 100" is a collection of unreleased and rare recordings from bands who have released records with Revelation Records in the past 15 years. The bands range from the late-'80s straightedge bands that the label started out with to the more recent metal and indie-rock stuff they've done as well.

Most of the tracks have been previously unreleased, though a few have appeared as comp tracks or B-sides in various places. The standout songs are the Youth of Today, Gorilla Biscuits, and Judge songs, the Judge song is one of the unused recordings from the coveted-by-record-collectors "Chung King Can Suck It" LP. The Side By Side song probably would be up there too, but it's a live recording that's not of the best quality.

One wonders whether there's any point in releasing an acoustic Ignite song since the bands recorded material is already hard to stomach. Farside are able to pull off an acoustic song, but Ignite really shouldn't have bothered. Another oddity is the Judas Factor song that shifts from techno beats and samples to fast hardcore. A much more successful attempt at experimentation than what Ignite tries, though not up to par with the band's other material.

If you're familiar with some of the bands on the record that you need more songs from, then this record

may be of interest to you, but the wide variety of bands and quality of recordings makes it unlikely that many people will get into the record as a whole.

-Rich Booher

Robert Anton Wilson

The Walls Came Tumbling Down

New Falcon Publications, 2002

www.newfalcon.com

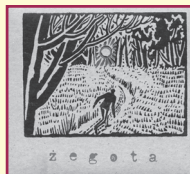
Robert Anton Wilson wrote this film script in the late '90s while settling into a new environment (Los Angeles) and recovering from a collapsed film deal. Wilson waited nearly a decade before publishing it. This is not one of Wilson's better works. Wilson's books of philosophy and social criticism shine with brilliance, wit and a clarifying debunking. Praise of these points festoons the covers here, but it is not The Walls Came Tumbling Down that earns that lauding. In the story Michael, an academic scientist, is so barraged with hallucinations and the paranormal that his entire reality is upset for reality only to emerge as a world run by a controlling shadow government with an extraterrestrial treaty. The quick scene changes and short dialogues threaten to unseat even the reader. The Golgotha imagery, folk hallucinogens and parallel universe theorization is a grab bag of alternate reality models that may have been advanced in the late '80s. However, it now reads as predictable, unexciting and not revealing at all. Certainly a necessary addition to the library of the Wilson completists, but a better entry point into his wisdom can be found in Reality is What you can get Away With or Prometheus Rising.

- Tom 'Tearaway' Schulte

Zegota

Namaste

Crimethinc



The first thing to note about this is the amazing packaging.

The packaging on CD's usually lacks creativity, but "Namaste" is contained within a wonderful silk-screened cardboard package, in which you'll find the CD and a booklet with lyrics, explanations, and art.

The music is intense and amazing when it's at its best. Zegota bring to mind their fellow Crimethincers Catharsis at times. They play heavy metallic riffs, with strong traces of melody, and are complimented by screamed and growled vocals. Several tracks sound like long, noisy, freestyle sessions. Those tracks weren't nearly as great as the songs which seem to be the norm for the band. Their rendition of Crosby, Stills & Nash's "Ohio" is well done. Zegota add their own touch, while tipping their hats to the original spirit of the song.

The lyrics are about a desire to live passionately for the most part, as can be seen quite clearly in the song "(just give me) one moment of passionate existence." The lyrics read as if they were written after heavy reading of Nietzsche. That strong desire for passion comes through very well on this record, which leaves one with a desire for more than just music.

-Rich Booher